

**NOAA Fisheries Announces
the 2004 Second Semiannual Fishing Season for the
Atlantic Shark Commercial Fisheries**

The commercial shark fisheries for all species groups and all regions will open on July 1, 2004. The quotas have been adjusted to account for any over- or underharvest in the second semiannual season of 2003. The regions are: Gulf of Mexico (Texas through the west coast of Florida), the South Atlantic (the east coast of Florida through North Carolina including the Caribbean Sea), and the North Atlantic (Virginia north). Landings in the Florida Keys, the border between the South Atlantic and Gulf of Mexico regions, will be counted against the Gulf of Mexico regional quota. The quota and closure date for the large coastal shark fishery in the North Atlantic region will be announced at a later date once the proposed rule regarding the quota split between the semiannual quotas is finalized (May 13, 2004, 69 FR 26540).

The other semiannual quotas in metric tons dressed weight (mt dw) and pounds (lbs) and closure dates are:

Species Group	Region	Semiannual quota level		Closure date
		mt dw	lbs dw	
Large Coastal Sharks	Gulf of Mexico	287.4	633,602	August 15, 2004, 11:30 pm local time
	South Atlantic	369.5	814,599.7	September 30, 2004, 11:30 pm local time
	North Atlantic	To be announced at a later date		
Small Coastal Sharks	Gulf of Mexico	10.2	22,486.9	To be determined, as necessary
	South Atlantic	212.2	467,816.1	
	North Atlantic	33.2	73,192.7	
Blue sharks	No regional quotas	136.5	300,927.9	
Porbeagle sharks	No regional quotas	46	101,411.6	
Pelagic sharks other than blue or porbeagle	No regional quotas	244	537,922.4	

Fishery closures are necessary to ensure that the semiannual fishing quotas for the period July 1 through December 31, 2004, are not exceeded. During a closure of a particular region, retention of, fishing for, possessing or selling large coastal sharks in that region are prohibited for persons fishing aboard vessels issued a limited access permit under 50 CFR 635.4. Additionally, the sale,

purchase, trade, or barter in that region of carcasses and/or fins of large coastal sharks harvested by a person aboard a vessel that has been issued a permit under 50 CFR 635.4 are prohibited, except for those that were harvested, offloaded, and sold, traded, or bartered prior to the closure and were held in storage by a dealer or processor.

The National Marine Fisheries Service is holding a number of public scoping meetings related to an Issues and Options paper for Amendment 2 to the Fishery Management Plan for Atlantic Tunas, Swordfish, and Sharks. More information is available on the web at: <http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/sfa/hms> or by calling Karyl Brewster-Geisz, Heather Stirratt, or Chris Rilling at (301) 713-2347.

This FAX notice is a courtesy to shark fishery participants to help keep you informed about your fishery. Official notice of Federal fishery actions is made through filing such notice with the Office of the Federal Register.

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John H. Dunnigan
Director, Office of Sustainable Fisheries

May 24, 2004
Dated